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ABSTRACT

A study examined whether writing instruction focusing on organizational patterns has a significant effect on reading comprehension. Writing samples were obtained from 18 second graders, nine of whom received no instruction, while the other nine received instruction on the purpose and use of the topic sentence, adding details to the topic, and story endings. Both groups used journals for their writing and generated their own writing topics. Both samples were also given the Gates MacGinitie Reading Test Form B, Levels 1 and 2 respectively, as pre- and posttest measures of reading comprehension. Although the results showed no significant difference in the comprehension scores between groups, there were observable differences in the writing patterns between the groups. The experimental group showed increased competency in writing skills and organization of their thoughts. (A literature review of studies on the relationship between reading and writing is appended.) (HOD)

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THE EFFECTS OF INSTRUCTION IN THE ORGANIZATIONAL PATTERNS OF WRITING ON COMPREHENSION

BY

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requirements of the Master of
Arts Degree in Reading Specialization
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The purpose of this study was to determine if instruction in the organizational patterns of writing have a significant effect on reading comprehension. Two samples each consisting of nine children were used. Both samples participated in writing activities, but only the experimental sample received instruction and guidance. Instruction focused on the purpose and use of the topic sentence, adding details to the topic, and story endings. Both samples used journals for their writing and topics for writing were generated by the students. Conferencing between instructor and student was done with both samples, but comments were very specific and related to the organization of the paragraph when working with the experimental sample.

Although at the conclusion of the study, there was no significant difference in the comprehension scores between samples there were observable differences in the writing patterns between the samples. The experimental sample showed increased competency in writing skills and organization of their thoughts.

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Comprehension is the main goal of any reading program. Along with this goal comes the concern about how to effectively teach comprehension. In order to teach comprehension, teachers have first to know its definition, its composition, There is extensive research on reading comprehension. Thorndike put it very succinctly, "Reading is thinking." Comprehension involves selection, coordination, and evaluation of the material read. Spache believes that reading materials are simplified only by reorganization and simplification of the relationships between the concepts presented.

According to Letton, there are five different levels to comprehension. The first level, factual, involves finding specific details. The second level, reorganizational, deals with summarizing and outlining. The third level, inferential, centers on anticipating outcomes and drawing conclusions. The fourth level, the interpretive, emphasizes recognition of figurative language. The last level, the evaluative, consists of comparison and contrast, fact and opinion, judgement and generalizations. All of these levels require reasoning on the part of the student.

Just as all these theories stress reasoning as a significant component of comprehension, so too, it should be noted that research can be cited to indicate that writing is also an area that requires reasoning. It demands the student select, coordinate and evaluate his material, his mes-

sage. Writing, it is believed, brings order, understanding, and meaning to thoughts and experiences. Henry Martin in his Write to Read Program stresses that children can be effective communicators if their early education stressed writing first rather than reading. If a child learns to organize his thoughts by sequencing, prioritizing, he has acquired skills needed for comprehension. If he can evaluate his writing in terms of what is important and what is not, again he has acquired skills for comprehension. Those skills needed to write are the skills needed to read. Research has shown reading and writing are related in that they seem to depend on common factors of language and experiences. Hildreth (1948), Lungsford (1978) found poor readers were also poor writers. Grobe and Grobe (1977) showed that reading "enhances" writing and knowing one is a predictor of the other. Collins (1979), in a questionable study, reported that a relationship exists between reading and writing. She also stated that in addition to writing improving comprehension, it also created a more favorable attitude toward instruction but, since poor control of variables was made, these "findings" are questionable. If it is true as Stotsky contends that a student's ability to read grows through writing, then this area should be explored as an effective means of instruction in comprehension.

Hypothesis

To provide additional evidence on this subject, a study was conducted to determine the relative effects on comprehension of writing instruction which centered on organizational methods. It was hypothesized that there would be no significant difference in the reading scores of children who received instruction in writing centering on organizational methods and children who did not receive such instruction.

Definitions

Journal- a notebook that was used for expressive writing.
Conferencing- There was discussion of the writing between the teacher and the student or between students and students. This discussion focused on directing the flow of ideas, adding details, enlarging the story idea, making changes.
Coaching- suggestions, questions, etc. that helped a student get past a problem area.
Gates McGinitie Reading Test- a standardized test to measure reading comprehension, only the comprehension section was used in this study.

Assumptions

It was assumed that the test scores were valid evaluations of the children's reading levels. It was also assumed that the writing levels were equally varied in both groups.

Limitations

The number of students used in the study was limited to eighteen. The length of the study was limited to approximately three and a half months.

Delimitations

The study has been conducted with one class and therefore cannot be extended to other populations.

Procedures

A self contained classroom consisting of eighteen second graders was selected because this group was available to the researcher and control could be exercised over instruction. The eighteen children were first divided equally into boys and girls. A random selection of the pupils was done with boys and girls chosen alternately until two groups were formed. Each group consisted of five girls and four boys. The ethnic balance was maintained with equal repre-

sentation of blacks, Asian, and other backgrounds respectively. The socio-economic status of the sample was middle class. The age of the experimental sample ranged from 7-1 to 7-11 with a medium age of 7-6. The control sample ranged in age from 7-1 to 8-6 with a medium age of 7-7.

Journals were kept by both samples. Writing was done twice a week in the journals by both samples. Both samples were allowed to write freely on any topic. Writing was also done by both samples once a week using the computer programs Kid Writer and Magic Slate.

The control sample did not receive instruction in the organization of a paragraph. Comments on their writing were directed to the content of the story only. For example, "You had a lot of fun playing soccer. I'm glad you won.". Comments were given orally or written directly in the journals. Spelling assistance was given as were directions to read back over what they had written. When working with the computer, both samples worked with a partner.

The experimental sample received instruction in the organization of the paragraph. Attention was directed to the topic sentence, the main body, and the closing of a paragraph. The children were guided into using their opening sentence to tell what they were going to write about. They were further instructed that the next part of their story should add details to their topic. They were directed to keep on topic and not get distracted with events

or people that diverged from the main idea of their story. Focus was also put on the ending of the paragraph. Bringing the paragraph to an ending was stressed as being as important as a good beginning.

Comments were directed to how a student organized his story, added details, and brought the story to a conclusion. Comments were shared with the group in order to point out good techniques or phrasing. Comments were done individually either orally or written in the journals. Comments were specific. For example, "Your opening sentence tells me exactly what you are going to write about." , or "I like the way you described your dog. I can almost see him.".

The experimental sample was also encouraged to think of ways of ending their stories other than placing The End after their last sentence or having the person in the story go to bed.

In addition to using conferencing to share examples of good sentences or paragraph structure, conferencing was also used between students when they worked together on stories. They were encouraged to talk and exchange ideas before they wrote.

The journals acted as a record of the students' writing. A Cognitive Abilities Test (Lorge Thorndike) was administered. The Gates MacGinitie Reading Test, com-

prehension only, Primary B, Forms 1 and 2 were used as a pre and post measure of reading comprehension. The reported reliability of these subtest measures were .78 and .81 respectively. The reliabilities were deemed sufficiently high for the subtests to be used in this study.

Results

After two samples of nine children selected by random means were formed, the samples were compared in terms of cognitive abilities. The Lorge Thorndike Cognitive Abilities Test was administered at the same time to both groups.

Table I

Results of Lorge Thorndike Cognitive Abilities Test

Sample	Mean	S.D.	T
Experimental N=9	71.88	10.58	.21
Control N=9	70.89	9.73	

The results, as shown in Table I, show that both groups were equally representative in cognitive abilities. The difference in the mean of .99 and the T value of .21 shows that there was no significant difference between the two groups in cognitive ability.

In order to determine if instruction in the organizational methods of writing contributed to an increase in comprehension, both samples were given the Gates MacGinitie Reading Test Form B, Levels 1 and 2 respectively as a pre and post test measure of comprehension. Tables II and III represent the results of these tests.

Table II
Pre Test Comprehension Scores
of Gates MacGinitie Test

Sample	Mean	S.D.	T
Experimental N=9	25.89	3.39	.14
Control N=9	25.66	5.87	

Table III
Post Test Comprehension Scores
of Gates MacGinitie Test

Sample	Mean	S.D.	T
Experimental N=9	30.66	3.49	.45
Control N=9	29.55	2.98	

A .23 difference in scores between the samples on the pre test and a 1.11 difference in scores on the post test cannot be considered a significant difference. The results of the T test, .45, indicate that the samples did not differ significantly in this measure at the conclusion of this study.

In a preliminary qualitative comparison of the samples, writing activities, and written materials, differences between the two samples were found. The experimental sample showed more use of the introductory sentence and fuller development of the topic. There was a decrease in run-on sentences. The experimental sample also used more compound subjects and verbs. The forms of the verb to be were used less frequently in favor of action verbs. There were more transitional words used in the paragraphs and the addition of simple clauses. Their stories progressed to a defintie ending.

The control sample wrote freely, but their writing lacked a unifying structure. Some stories resembled a list of activities or people. Most wrote without a feeling for an audience. There was no stopping to re-read or evaluate. Once started, they continued until they were finished. Most endings were abrupt with no definite conclusion.

Overall, the experimental sample showed definite growth in paragraph structure and their abiility to convey meaning. These differences are not, however, statistically significant.

Conclusions and Implications

Based on the results of this study, it can be concluded that instruction in the organizational patterns of

writing does have an effect on reading comprehension, but that effect is not statistically significant. The amount of gain made by the experimental sample could have been influenced by the length of the study which was approximately three and a half months. Perhaps a lengthier program of instruction would have resulted in more significant gains. It must be noted, too, that the students are second graders and must be considered in a developmental stage of reading. Although comprehension is stressed in the second grade program, there is still an emphasis on building decoding skills and automaticity in word recognition. If an older group of children had been selected, perhaps the results would have been more significantly in favor of the experimental group.

Nevertheless, the fact that the experimental sample did better on the post test does support past research on the relatedness of reading and writing. Once students become authors themselves, they are more aware of the organization of written materials. With this heightened awareness comes increased comprehension. This awareness goes back and forth between reading and writing and comprehension increases as the student recognizes that organization as a tool to unlock meaning. Writing improves as the student becomes attuned to the organization of the reading paragraph. The student imitates in his writing the

patterns he has seen in reading.

In comparing the writing of the experimental sample and the control sample, significant differences between the two were found. The experimental sample made greater use of the topic sentence and developed their story line around it. They brought their stories to a definite conclusion that followed the story line. The experimental sample showed greater use of transitional words throughout their stories. There was evidence of sentence combining with the appearance of simple clauses. These elements were not present in the writing of the control sample. To borrow a term used by Graves (1975), these writers remained reactive. They did not write for an audience, nor did they proofread what they had written. They lacked a unifying element and a sense of progression in their stories.

It can be concluded that children do need instruction in the components and the organization of the paragraph. Discovery of these elements on their own may be delayed or not occur at all. Instruction would benefit both reading and writing. There is still varied viewpoints on how this instruction should be done - through reading or through writing. As of late, writing has been receiving the greater emphasis. Writing does seem a very suitable means of instruction since it demands more involvement on the part of the student.

With the emphasis on writing, there is a need for further research on the effect on comprehension of creative writing versus formal writing. Also research is needed to identify those elements in writing which would transfer to reading comprehension. Finally although there has been been no statistically significant correlation shown between instruction in the organizational patterns of writing and increased comprehension, the topic should not be disregarded.

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Related Research:

The Relationship Between Reading and Writing

Having reviewed the research on writing and reading, the inference can be drawn that researchers have found some indications that reading and writing are related and that instruction that keeps this premise in mind may benefit reading comprehension. It may also be stated that the research to date on any significant increase in comprehension due to such instruction is inconclusive. It is agreed that this area of research is a prime area for further research.

Those researchers who have explored the relatedness of reading and writing have approached the topic from different points of view. The first point of view is almost a parody on the dilemma of the chicken and the egg. Should the organizational patterns of the reading paragraph be taught first and then when mastered applied to writing, or should instruction in the organizational patterns of writing be taught first and then applied to reading.

Another difference of opinion arises over what aspect of writing instruction has the most effect on reading comprehension. Some researchers feel that creative writing gives the student the best mode of instruction. Other researchers feel modeling and reproduction of the writing of well-known authors is the best approach.

It is the purpose of this paper to explore all of these viewpoints. The first viewpoint is supported by Trosky and Wood (1985) who believe writing involves relationships. In writing, a student begins with a group of ideas which he

must order and relate to each other. When he has done this he achieves comprehensibility in his writing. If the student is given the opportunity to master the skill then he will have an improved ability to discover relationships in the writing of others.

Writing, therefore, according to Trosky and Wood (1985) must be taught with the view that writing involves a series of choices. The student must select, sort, classify, and order his ideas. This process is repeated in all three stages, composing, transcribing, and editing.

In a separate article, Trosky and Wood (1975) studied brainstorming as a preliminary activity. The ideas generated were then classified and then ordered and finally used to produce a paragraph. In the preliminary stages, the students felt compelled to use all the material generated. With subsequent attempts and practice the students began to discard non relevant data. They became aware of one unifying attribute that expressed their thoughts.

This ordering and unifying of ideas takes place in the composing stage of writing. It has its parallel stage in reading which Trosky and Wood term <u>recomposition</u>. Here the students must identify and group details. They must also recognize the internal and external sequence of these details.

The transcription stage of writing has its parallel in the reflection stage of reading. The writer is absorbed

in the mechanics of the writing process whereas the reader is observing the techniques that the writer has used.

The editing stage in which the writer re-examines his writing for clarity and form has its counterpart in the re-action stage of reading in which the student evaluates and assimulates into his own experiences what the author has written.

Trosky and Wood believe the teacher must keep these two models in mind during instruction. If this is done, then writng and reading reinforce each other instead of remaining two different subjects.

Dionisio (1983) also sees the use of reading and writing as a unified tool for learning. Dionisio maintains that the process of writing involves the students in reading. Students must re-read their drafts. They read when they need additional information for their topic. Through reading they discover style and form and organizational techniques. They often imitate these styles and forms. Being an author gives them insights into reading that they had previously been unaware of. Therefore, reading is enhanced by daily writing.

Schwartz also values writing as an effective tool for increasing comprehension. Evaluation is a comprehension skill in reading. It is also a skill in writing. The child must take his own writing and evaluate the ideas and the way he expressed those ideas. Rewriting is an ideal

method of conveying newly discovered ideas to others, Schwartz (1977).

Coleman (1980) sees the organizational patterns of the paragraph being taught directly through the revision process of writing. The role of the teacher here is to comment and react to what the student has written, offer suggestions for corrections and improvement and give reasons for the corrections. The revisions direct the student again to the organizational patterns of a paragraph that are common to reading and writing.

Evaluative comments, with reasons for the judgement, are teaching devices, Coleman (1980). Commenting on the student's use of topic sentence, closing paragraphs, use of details makes the student aware of the importance of these in communication. The transfer should occur from the student's writing to the writing of others.

This view is in direct contrast to that expressed by Coomber (1985). Coomber feels that before a student can be expected to write coherently and in well organized paragraphs, he must understand structure in the area of reading.

In reading, in order to comprehend the paragraph the student must understand both its structure and its function. The topic sentence is the structure that holds together the paragraph. Details are given to support the topic sentence. According to Coomber, if this is not kept in mind then the student has only a list of facts with no reference.

He fails to grasp the writer's message and without having the big idea the details are also harder to recall.

Coomber sees instruction taking an intergrated approach between reading and writing. There would be an emphasis on main idea and details. Questioning would move away from detailing information to the more critical. Questions should tie details to the main idea.

This emphasis on reading is given support by other researchers. In a study by Grobe and Grobe (1977), the relationship between writing and reading ability is attributed to several factors which may operate jointly or independently of each other. Good readers read more and are exposed to good writng structures which they often imitate in their own writing. Second, knowing the organizational patterns of reading will carry over into the student's writing and therefore instruction must emphasize these patterns. Lastly, exposure to developmental techniques will provide the student with models to use in presenting his ideas.

Belanger (1978) in his research study cites Frye, Perrin and Ebbett who also support the view that reading enhances the student's competence in language and the development of the ability to write. Wide reading gives the student a wide background of knowledge to write about. Belanger found support for the correlation between the amount of reading students did and their writing skill.

Students who wrote well read more and came from homes where there was a collection of books and where parents also read.

Knoll (1977) discusses the influence of reading on writing. Knoll cites studies done by Lacampagne (1969), Donelson (1967), Nakamura (1970) which point out some common characteristics of effective writers. They owned and read more books, spent more of their leisure time reading, completed more outside reading assignments.

These are general characteristics and the role of reading in writing can only be implied because there is no substantial body of research that definetly states the correlation. Yet following the view that good readers make good writers and often imitate style and form they have encountered leads to an entire system of instruction.

Stotsky (1972) believes that by its very nature "writing entails reading". Writing focuses attention on different forms of expression and as a result increase the facility with which students understand and use language. The form that Stotsky would use is writing excercises based on literary excerpts. In her article, Stotsky details dictation, reproduction excercises, precis writing, sentence combining, and sentence pattern exercises.

Dictation according to Brown (1915) has several benefits. The student recieves practice in working with sentences. Attention is focused on spelling, grammar, punctuation and capitalization. There is exposure to known

and unknown vocabulary and good patterns of speech. Finally, there is an intergration of spoken language to writing.

Stotsky (1972) sees the value of dictation as requiring the student to re-read the passage several times in order to correct. Vocabulary is enhanced because it is in context. Listening skills are emphasized. In order to write, the student must attend closely to what is said.

Lundsteen's (1971) study supported the idea that instruction in listening enhanced reading and writing. Listening also effects the student's ability to deal with phrasing and syntactic units more so than reading alone.

Reproduction involves paraphrasing a paragraph. This is the essence of what we do when we take notes, silent read, take messages. Since this is such an important part of our daily lives it is a critical skill. It might be one of the first methods to teach comprehension if coupled with discussion of the essential information that needs to be included, Stotsky (1972).

Paraphrasing as it is more familiarly known is used in translating foreign language into English. Stotsky sees its use as transcribing English into the language the student understands. It is putting a passage into his own words.

All of the above methods Stotsky sees as areas of instruction and not as methods of testing comprehension, a use that is employed now.

The next two writing exercises involve the reduction of the passage. In precis writing the student is limited to the number of words he may use to express the ideas contained in the passage. The student must select the important facts and reject the unimportant ones, Hossack (1957).

Reduction is also a component of sentence combining. Students take several kernel sentences and combine them into more complex expression. Mellon (1969) found that practice in this activity does transfer to creative writing. Combs (1979) did not find that there was any significant effect on comprehension. Strong (1976) feels that the manipulation of the sentence which requires the student to hold the thought of the sentence in his head while he manipulates it is the power of the approach.

Practice in sentence pattern is a expansion of the sentence through transformations, additions, substitutions. Lefevre (1970) feels that comprehension in reading can be improved by emphasizing the sentence and not the word as the message bearing unit.

The last method is copying. Memorizing prose or poetry or even copying a passage word for word is an acceptable activity here. It is somehow assumed that the rote exposure to language will somehow increase the student's facility with language. Copying does not involve much interaction with the thoughts expressed other than repro-

duction of them.

All of these methods narrated by Stotsky are on the literal level. Being able to deal with information on the literal level according to Stotsky (1972) is a prerequisite, a base for the independent and creative thought.

Out of all of the above mentioned methods, sentence combining is the one that has attracted further research. Combs (1977) reported on sentence combining as an aid to reading comprehension. Syntax often interferes with comprehension. If a student's ability to handle syntax is increased then it follows that his comprehension should increase. The results of the Combs study (1975) showed this to be true. There were significant gains in reading comprehension after practice in sentence combining.

Studies by Bateman and Zidonis (1964), Hunt (1964), Mellon (1969) have supported the view that practice in sequentially structured sentence combining effects positively the ability of students to deal with syntax, but only in speaking and writing. However, studies by Bormuth, Manning, Carr and Pearson (1970) point out the interdependence of reading comprehension and the knowledge and ability to handle different syntactic forms. Again there is numerous research that identifies the relationship, points out the logic of the correlation. Hughes (1976) worked with seventh grade students. He used sentence combining with half the group. The results were not significant. The experimental

made gains in the identification of the largest unit of meaning and ability to intergrate syntax with semantics. Fisher (1973) worked with fifth, seventh, and ninth graders using sentence combining and found differences in the maturity of the syntax in writing, but no difference in the rate of reading or comprehension. White and Karl (1980) feel if researchers finally link sentence combining to improved gains in reading comprehension then the statement by Bever and Bower may be an actuality: "... a reading program ought to develop sentence attack, just as earlier it developed word attack; and it ought to develop grammatical, structural recognition just as earlier it developed word recognition." p24.

Stotsky also strongly supports sentence combining. She feels in spite of the limited evidence to support the use of writing exercises that focus on syntax to improve reading comprehension, there is no need to reject the idea. An interrelationship exists between reading and writing because they are both language based. Syntax controls the comprehensibility of both reading and writing.

A less formal approach to teaching syntax and paragraph structure would be supported by Graves. Graves would use creative writing only. Graves (1975) feels that an informal environment stimulates a child to write more and in greater length. The students do not need to be motivated or supervised and so left alone they will write longer.

Writing is inhibited by large amounts of assigned writing. Methodologies have less influence than the child's level of writing development. Graves (1975) identified two types of writers which he terms reactive and reflective. The reactive writer is inconsistent in problem solving strategies. He speaks as he writes and most of his writing expresses action and reaction. He proofreads at the word level only and rarely reviews his writing. He does not perceive his writing as meant for an audience. He is centered in the affective domain.

The reflective writer does not speak while composing. He proofreads at the work and phrase level. He sees his writing as intended for an audience. He uses feelings that are similar to his own in writing.

By observing children as they write, the teacher can assess the developmental level the child is at. The teacher can then modify her comments and suggestions accordingly.

Children acquire perceptions through writing. All the senses are involved in putting the words on paper, Graves (1983). According to Graves, writing expands perception. Children see the writing process in greater depth and are actively involved because they are making choices. They are choosing the information they wish to use. "Vision comes with experience, and through working with someone who will expand it through questions and responses to work in progress." Graves (1983) p.152.

Gaskins (1982) follows many of the ideas emphasized by Graves. She, however, includes brainstorming of topics which the children copy into the back of their journals. This list is a reference for the child when he cannot generate a topic for himself. She also feels that given the background structure of the classroom routine, the students work well and independently on writing activities.

Gaskins (1982) outlines three stages of writing which she terms very simply, Before Writing, During Writing, and After Writing.

The Before Writing stage involves a discussion and a sharing of what the topic will be, how it will be organized, where to go for further information.

Gaskins feels very strongly that children should only write about what they know. None of their composing time should be spent gathering information. Once information is gathered the student spends time thinking about what information he wants to use and how he wil organize the ideas. Gaskins quotes Strickland (1972), "The quality of what is expressed in writing depends upon the quality of thinking that undergrids it." p.498.

The During Writing stage involves getting the ideas down on paper. Here the child is encouraged to write without concern for spelling, capitalization, grammar, even organization. The focus is on the ideas and not the form. The teacher comments on certain sentences or helps a student

get passed a problem area.

It is during this phase of writing that revision should take place, but this is dependent on the maturity of the student. The revision involves re-reading, checking to see if the message is understood. This is what Graves (1983) meant as seeing writing as intended for an audience.

The After Writing stage is the stage that is critical in the affective domain. It is also the phase in which most instruction in writing is given, Gaskins (1982). The revision can be given in written comment, group discussion, or small group discussion. It is always necessary that the writer be an active evaluator and that he remain in control. The teacher's role is to keep her comments specific in nature and not broad statements like "terrific". Gaskins again agrees with other researchers, if you comment, you must supply the explanation.

Specific skills can be taught directly as the need arises in the writing. The students can apply what they have learned to their revisions or to an entirely new piece of writing.

Schwartz (1977) also advocates a similar mode of instruction. Rewriting should move away from the judgemental in which the teacher is viewed as being interested in the correction of mistakes. Schwartz recommends intervention before the work is finished and the choice of what is to be revised left to the student. "The aim is not a perfect

product, but rather to show students how to make effective changes in expression with satisfaction and competence." p.758.

In conclusion, the purpose of this research has been to relate the many aspects of the topic, the effect of writing on reading. The question of which area, reading or writing, should be taught first has been reviewed along with several methods of instruction in each area. The conclusion that can be drawn from the research is that the area is still open to research and further data is needed before any conclusive statement can be made concerning the effect of reading on writing or vice versa.

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APPENDIX A

Raw Scores of Lorge Thorndike Cognitive Abilities Test

X	Y
85	83
82	79
80	76
74	75
73	72
71	72
66	70
66	59
50	52

APPENDIX B

Pre and Post Test Scores of Gates MacGinitie

X	X	Y	Y
30	33	32	34
30	33	31	32
30	32	29	32
27	32	29	31
26	32	28	30
24	31	24	29
23	31	24	28
22	31	21	26
21	21	12	24